



# Responding to Katrina

## Meeting the Challenge



*After Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in late August, we launched a massive response to provide for the storm's animal victims. We cooperatively operated large-scale temporary emergency sheltering facilities at Gonzalez, Louisiana, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi, that in the end helped rescue and care for more than 10,000 lost and abandoned animals.*



**H**URRICANE KATRINA HAD A MASSIVE IMPACT ON OUR WORK in the last months of 2005—an impact that will continue long into the future. When the disaster struck in late August, we turned out in force to cooperatively operate large-scale temporary emergency sheltering facilities at Gonzales, Louisiana, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and to outfit and staff an innovative overflow shelter at the Dixon Correctional Institute in Jackson, Louisiana.

Thousands of volunteers and professionals traveled to the stricken areas, and we helped coordinate their efforts and cover their field expenses. Our logistical support brought millions of dollars worth of essential supplies and services to the afflicted zones. We paid for the facilities and refrigerated transport vehicles that supported operations and carried animals out of the area. We even chartered planes to fly rescued animals to local shelter facilities in other states to make room for more brought in from the field. In the end we helped rescue and provide care for more than 10,000 lost and abandoned animals on the Gulf Coast.

Our staff also spent countless hours during the workweek, in the evenings, and over weekends at our national reunion center answering calls from desperate evacuees and working to help them track down the location of their displaced pets. We eventually helped reunite some 2,500 animals with their families, and our efforts working with animal shelters around the country helped ensure that many other dogs and cats found new loving homes.

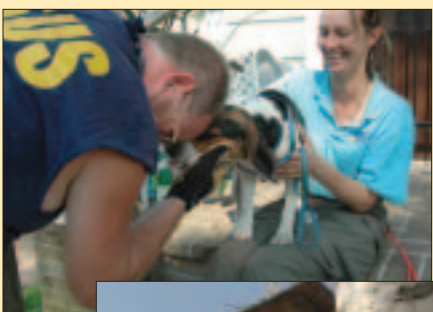
At press time, we have awarded more than \$2.7 million in reimbursement grants to more than 75 local humane societies, animal control agencies, and rescue groups across the country that assisted in Katrina relief efforts by sending staff members to the stricken zones, accepting rescued animals, and working to reunite pets with their families.

And to date we have committed more than \$7 million in reconstruction grants to organizations affected by Katrina. This includes a \$4.5 million grant-and-aid package to the Louisiana SPCA and \$665,000 to the Humane Society of South Mississippi—two major organizations whose facilities were destroyed or severely damaged by the storm—and \$250,000 to build a new animal shelter in Hancock County, Mississippi. (For a complete list of the grants our family of organizations awarded in 2005, see page 20.)

On Capitol Hill we are also working to secure federal funds for rebuilding all of the animal care and control agencies and shelters in the devastated zones—and we are strongly supporting the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, which would require state and local authorities to include pets and service animals in their disaster evacuation plans. (See the box for more on the PETS Act.)



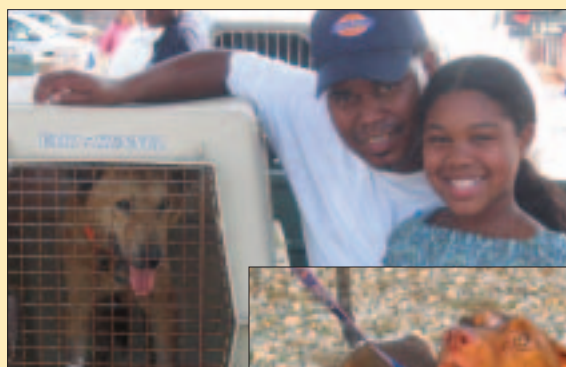




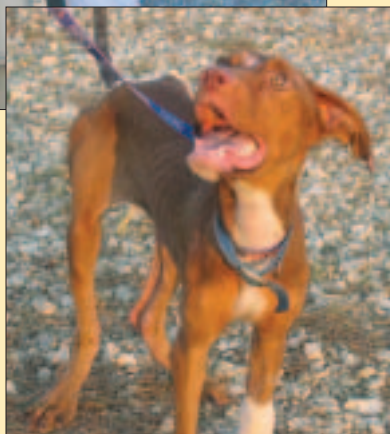
*As our direct relief efforts wound down, we began working to rebuild sheltering capacity in affected communities along the Gulf.*

spay/neuter vouchers and a high-volume clinic in Mississippi, and a partnership with Louisiana State University to develop a program modeled after our own Rural Area Veterinary Services program.

Rescuing stranded animals and providing for their care was perhaps the most high profile of our disaster response efforts, but the long road to recovery will require rebuilding the ability of local sheltering and animal control organizations to effectively provide the services their communities need. And our work will not end until the humane infrastructure on the Gulf Coast is even stronger than it was before the storm hit.



*Working countless hours throughout the workweek and on evenings and weekends, our staff helped reunite some 2,500 displaced animals with their families.*



## Moving Forward

WHILE OUR DISASTER TEAMS toiled around-the-clock to meet the immediate needs of Hurricane Katrina's animal victims, we also looked to the needs of pets and their caretakers during future disasters. We worked to build cosponsorship of the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act (H.R. 3858)—introduced by U.S. Reps. Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Christopher Shays (R-CT) in September, less than a month after Katrina made landfall—to ensure that people are never again forced to choose between their own safety and that of their pets when disaster strikes. The PETS Act requires local and state emergency preparedness authorities to include in their evacuation plans how they will accommodate household pets and service animals in the event of a major disaster. In order to qualify for grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), local and state authorities must submit these plans.

H.R. 3858 passed the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in April 2006 on the same day the Senate version of the bill (S. 2548) was introduced by Sens. Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). We built on our success with the House bill to push through the introduction of S. 2548 in the Senate.

The Senate bill also grants FEMA the authority to assist in developing disaster plans to meet the needs of individuals with pets and service animals; allows financial help for states to create and operate emergency shelters for people with their animals; and requires the provision of essential assistance for individuals with household pets and service animals, and the animals themselves, following a major disaster.

As we learned too well in the aftermath of last year's hurricanes, the bond between people and their pets is so great that it becomes nearly impossible to separate the human rescue and relief effort and the animal rescue effort during a disaster. Emergency preparedness plans need to reflect the fact that 63 percent of American households have pets, and most of these pets are considered part of the family. And we will continue working to ensure that they do.